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Massachusetts Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force Convened

Industry experts will produce roadmap for construction and marketability of buildings that meet energy needs with efficiency and on-site renewables

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force – a group appointed at Governor Deval Patrick's direction to help the state's public and private sectors design and construct super-efficient "green" buildings – held its first meeting today, laying out an agenda to develop specifications for the first state-owned zero net energy building by January 1, 2010 and statewide adoption of the standard for new construction by 2030.

By employing aggressive use of energy efficiency and on-site renewable energy, zero net energy buildings meet most of their energy needs through efficiency measures and on-site renewable energy generation so that, on net, they increase neither energy demand nor greenhouse gas emissions. Zero net energy buildings also have the potential to lower costs for residences and businesses and spur clean energy technology development and job growth.

Appointed and chaired by Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles, the task force comprises a range of building and energy industry leaders, including architects, engineers, developers, builders, clean energy experts, utility professionals, and academics. The group is guided by a steering committee of state agency professionals and supported financially by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's Renewable Energy Trust. Industrial Economics, Incorporated of Cambridge will organize and manage the task force, with assistance from Steven Winter Associates, Inc., a national leader in research, design and consulting for high performance buildings. Governor Patrick has asked the group to deliver its recommendations in March, 2009.

The Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force is in line with Governor Patrick's April, 2007 "Leading by Example" Executive Order, which committed state government to reduce energy use at state facilities by 20 percent by 2012 and 30 percent by 2030, while increasing use of renewable energy sources and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The Task Force's work is also

integral to the Administration's goal of making Massachusetts a leader in the creation of "green" jobs.

"Nationally, buildings account for 40 percent of overall energy use, two-thirds of total electricity consumption, and half of all greenhouse gas emissions," Secretary Bowles said. "Raising the bar for energy efficiency in buildings will save money, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and boost jobs in the Commonwealth's burgeoning clean energy and green building sectors."

Governor Patrick has called on the Task Force to make recommendations that would:

- enable the state to issue specifications for the first state-owned zero net energy building by January 1, 2010;
- specify an interim standard for state-owned construction that is significantly more stringent than the current Massachusetts LEED Plus benchmark; and
- for private development, point the way toward broad marketability of zero net energy residential and commercial buildings by 2020, and statewide adoption of zero net energy buildings for new construction by 2030.

"Representing the real estate industry, NAIOP Massachusetts is excited to be a part of this task force to determine the feasibility of a voluntary effort to achieve 'zero net' energy in the future for privately-developed projects," said David Begelfer, CEO of National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP) Massachusetts. "With the increasing challenges from a volatile energy market, this may turn out to be a win-win for owners, tenants, and the environment."

In the months ahead, the Task Force will examine and recommend solutions for a number of issues, including current challenges to constructing a state-owned zero net energy building, measurable endpoints to include in an interim "green" state building standard, and possible barriers to adoption of a zero net energy standard for commercial and residential buildings.

"Zero energy is the modern portal through which we will see super efficient buildings become part of our landscape, and that's what needs to happen," said Task Force member Bruce Coldham of Coldham & Hartman Architects in Amherst.

The Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force launches its work just a week after Governor Patrick signed revolutionary new energy legislation into law. The Green Communities Act promises to remake the energy marketplace by aggressively encouraging energy efficiency and renewable energy, and in many ways, will provide a broad range of tools to meet the Task Force objectives. Raising green building standards for both public and private construction advances the clean energy goals embodied in the new law and embraced by the Patrick Administration.

"This represents an important step in demonstrating our state's commitment and leadership in the field of energy efficient buildings," said Leon R. Glicksman, a Task Force member and Professor of Building Technology and Mechanical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Zero net energy buildings constitute a small but growing number of buildings across the country. Meeting over the next several months, the Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force will likely look to a number of recently-developed and planned super-efficient buildings. In Greenfield, for example, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority is in planning to build a new Franklin Regional

Transit Center that goes beyond LEED certification requirements to achieve a net zero or near-net zero energy profile through an integrated, energy efficient design for the entire building.

In the residential sector, a Colrain family is using a 3-kilowatt solar electric system, a solar hot water system, and double thick walls that allow for over 11 inches of recycled cellulose insulation in the walls and 14 inches in the ceiling in its net zero energy home.

(List of Zero Net Energy Buildings Task Force members is attached.)

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